

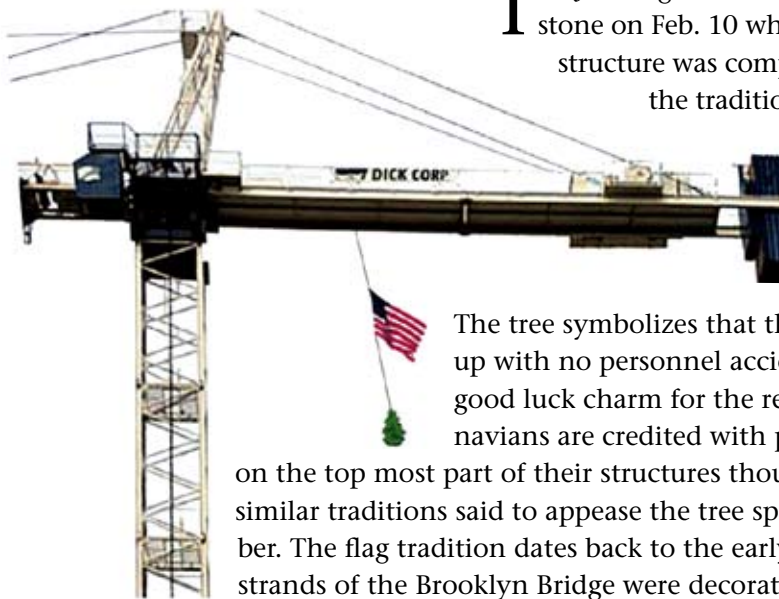
# Courier

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## Topping off with a tradition



The Jennings Building expansion reached a milestone on Feb. 10 when the top-most part of the structure was completed. Those who attended the traditional construction ceremony

or passers-by saw a flag and a tree hanging proudly from the tall construction crane.

Why a tree and a flag?

The tree symbolizes that the project structure went up with no personnel accidents and represents a good luck charm for the rest of the project. Scandinavians are credited with placing a Christmas tree on the top most part of their structures though Native Americans hold similar traditions said to appease the tree spirits for using trees for lumber. The flag tradition dates back to the early 1900s when the last cable strands of the Brooklyn Bridge were decorated with the American flag

*See Topping, page 2*

### State of the County address

## Proposal ends vehicle decal & fee

Eliminating the vehicle decal fee was one of the proposals made by Board Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly** in his State of the County address recently as he discussed possible ways of providing tax relief to county residents. His address was broadcast Feb. 13 on Channel 16.

According to the chairman, the time and effort to keep the decal current is a burden on county residents. "During our upcoming Fiscal Year 2007 budget, I will ask

the board to eliminate both the \$25 decal fee and the need for decals on (residents) vehicles,"

he said, pointing out that technology has made obsolete the need for a visible decal to enforce personal property tax payment. If adopted, the current green decal on residents' vehicles will be the last one needed. Other tax relief initiatives for county residents

*See Decal, page 3*



*Topping, from page 1*

by ironworkers.

Planning began in 1994 for the Jennings Building expansion. Bonds financing construction and renovation projects were part of the Public Safety Bond Referenda in 1998 and 2002. The total project is estimated at \$115 million.

"The courthouse expansion is greatly needed to match the growth of the county," said **Ellen vanHully-Bronson**, DPWES project coordinator, who noted that the county's population has increased to more than 1 million people, directly affecting the number of cases, judges and support staff required.

The project includes 316,000 square feet of new space which will be used for courtrooms, judicial chambers, office space and support space as well as expanding the public law

library which will increase after-hours access. Construction started in August 2004 with a celebrated ground-breaking event featuring county leaders. "The project is 40 percent

complete and on schedule," said vanHully-Bronson. The Dick Corporation, the general contractor, will turn over the six-level building

#### January Construction Progress

- ♦ Overall project is 37 percent complete.
- ♦ The last major structural concrete placement was Jan. 27.
- ♦ Perimeter wall backfill is 95 percent complete.
- ♦ Reshores have been removed on the lower level, first floor, second floor and approximately 60 percent on the third floor.
- ♦ Mechanical ductwork, electrical cabinets, conduit installation are in progress on the lower level.
- ♦ Masonry block work is 90 percent complete on the lower level.
- ♦ Masonry block work has begun on the first floor.
- ♦ The expansion portion of the project is on schedule and on budget.

expansion on a floor-by-floor basis beginning in fall 2006 with the lower level and ending with the fifth floor in April 2007.

When the expansion is completed, most of the Juvenile and Domestic Relations District Court staff will move to the new facility, freeing parts of the old courthouse for historic records and associated use.

The overall project includes renovation of parts of the existing Jennings Building that is now more than 20 years old. Renovations to the 230,000-square-foot building include staff and public areas of the courthouse, mechanical system upgrades and electrical system upgrades.

The total expansion and renovation project is scheduled for completion in March 2008.

In addition to vanHully-Bronson, other DPWES members of the county Courthouse Expansion and Renovation Team are **Magdi Imbabi**, senior project engineer; **Vish Kowdley**, engineer; **Frank Lentini**, engineer; **Nikolai Dubynin**, project engineer; **James Andrews**, engineer technician; **Ron Waldrop**, senior inspector; and **Cathy Spaine**, space planner.

Anyone interested in following the progress of this project can see pictures of week-by-week progress on the county Web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/construction/courtsexp/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/construction/courtsexp/). ■

See pictures of the courthouse expansion and renovation at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/construction/courtsexp/](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dpwes/construction/courtsexp/)



Construction workers sign the final beam that went into the Jennings Building expansion. (Photographs are from the Dick Company.)

Decals, from page 1

are being considered.

Connolly's address summarized the status of Fairfax County, concluding the state of the county is strong. "We have once again turned in an extraordinary economic performance, maintained a low crime rate, strengthened a world-class education system and launched a landmark environmental program. We have taken significant steps to ensure that young families, teachers, firefighters and police will have affordable homes, and launched a new effort to address the needs of our senior citizens who have invested a lifetime in our community," he said.

Transportation and affordable housing remain concerns in the county. Federal, state and local support for initiatives such as funding Metro to Dulles Airport and beyond, im-

proving transportation infrastructure and expanding alternative transportation initiatives, such as teleworking, bicycling and pedestrian improvements are critical to the continued development of the area. Affordable housing, a priority in the county, has seen 846 housing units retained, well on the road to attaining the goal of preserving 1,000 units in four years.

Connolly concluded by saying, "Local government is very much about doing the common things, and in Fairfax County, we can proudly say we do them uncommonly well."

The entire State of the County address still can be seen on Channel 16 on Sundays and Fridays at 5:30 p.m. and Wednesdays at 7:30 p.m. or a video can be obtained through the library's ELLVIS system. The text also is available on the county Web site at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov). ■

**"Local government is very much about doing the common things, and in Fairfax County, we can proudly say we do them uncommonly well."**



## EAC election process begins

The terms of six representatives to the Employees Advisory Council will expire May 31. Nominations for these positions will end at the close of business on March 31 with the election held in April.

The members whose two-year terms are expiring are: **Sarah Goldman** (Group 2), **Steve Baker** (Group 4), **Anita Baker** (Group 5), **Sureyya Kanli** (Group 9), **Stella Norman** (Group 10) and **Paula Ferrer** (Group 11).

The EAC recently changed the length of a representative's term. Group 4 and Group 11 will have elections for a two-year term from June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2008. Group 2, Group 5, Group 9 and Group 10 will have elections for a three-year term from June 1, 2006 – May 31, 2009.

Only merit or benefit-eligible exempt employees in those groups may nominate, sign petitions and vote in this election. Nominating forms will be available by March 3 from department payroll contacts or the Department of Human Resources.

Employees should give careful consideration to nominating worthy candidates. Those elected represent employees in their groups by acting as a liaison between management and employees. Consent of the nominated person must be obtained before a petition is signed. Election to the EAC imposes a workload that some employees may not be able to meet.

Nominators should follow the instructions on the petition carefully. Names should be both signed and printed so petitions can be verified. A 100-word statement from the candidate should be attached to the petition. It will be printed on the ballot and elsewhere.

For more information, contact **Bob Fitzpatrick** at 703-324-3306, TTY 703-222-7314 or by e-mail at [robert.fitzpatrick@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:robert.fitzpatrick@fairfaxcounty.gov). ■

Fairfax County  
Employees Advisory Council



Advocates for a better workplace.



# FY 2007 Budget - Opportunity for investment

**The FY 2007  
proposed budget  
for all funds is  
\$5.49 billion**

When he presented the FY 2007 Budget to the Board of Supervisors and county residents on Monday, Feb. 27, County Executive **Tony Griffin** noted that it "is balanced and has been prepared in accordance with the Board of Supervisors' Budget Guidelines."

The board's Budget Guidelines for FY 2007 represented a shift from previous directives where spending was limited to revenue growth. In recent years, low mortgage rates and strong job growth have created a red-hot housing market, increasing housing values and subsequently, property tax assessments. To address significant and sustained increases in real estate assessments, the board set a percentage-based spending growth limit for both Fairfax County Public Schools and the county,

FY 2006 Revised Budget Plan, while Direct General Fund expenditures total \$1.17 billion and reflect an increase of 3.9 percent. The county executive proposed to increase the county's operating transfer to Fairfax County Public Schools by 6 percent to \$1,517.22 million, an increase of \$85.88 million over the FY 2006 level. The combined transfer for School Operating and Debt service is \$1.66 billion, which represents 52.2 percent of total county General Fund Disbursements.

For the sixth consecutive year, average residential real estate assessments increased by double digits. The FY 2007 real estate estimate is based on a 22.7 percent increase in the FY 2007 valuation of real property, reflecting a 19.76 percent increase in equalization (the reassessment of existing structures) and a 2.94 percent increase due to new construction. Residential equalization still accounts for the largest part of the increase, growing 20.57 percent. All categories of residential property again experienced double-digit increases in value for FY 2007, although the current housing market has begun to cool.

Recognizing the significant impact that this has on residential taxpayers, a real estate tax rate cut became a top priority. Consequently, the county executive's advertised budget includes a real estate tax rate cut of seven cents – from \$1.00 per \$100 of assessed value to \$0.93 per \$100 of assessed value. With this cut, the total real estate tax rate reduction since FY 2003 is 30 cents or approximately \$3,295 in cumulative annual savings for the typical residential taxpayer from what would have been paid under the FY 2002 rate. Nevertheless, the average homeowner will still pay approximately \$544 or 12.1 percent more in real estate taxes over FY 2006 due to the assessment increase.

Even with the real estate tax rate reduction, General Fund revenues are anticipated to increase 8.8 percent. This growth enabled the county executive to invest in new facili-

## Board of Supervisors' Priorities

- Strong investment in education
- Public safety and gang prevention
- Affordable housing
- Environmental protection
- Transportation improvements
- Revenue diversification to reduce the burden on homeowners

rather than allowing growth to match the forecasted increase in revenue. The board set the target for the schools' increase at six percent and the county limit at five percent, excluding new facilities, the Metro contribution, and required county and

school debt service payments. The guidelines also included a directive to develop a budget that allows the board to reduce the real estate tax rate further if assessments and other revenues continued to increase significantly as projected.

The board also directed the county executive to continue a fiscal plan in which spending initiatives are linked to the board priorities established in February 2004, as well as to the county core purpose and seven vision elements (see boxes). These connections are seen throughout the FY 2007 budget which can be accessed online at [www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb).

The FY 2007 proposed budget for all funds is \$5.49 billion. General Fund Disbursements, which include the transfers to the School Operating and Debt Service funds, total \$3.18 billion, an increase of 2.7 percent over the

**"(The budget) is  
balanced and has  
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Board of  
Supervisors'  
Budget  
Guidelines."  
- Tony Griffin**

*Budget, from page 4*

ties opening in FY 2007 or shortly thereafter including the Katherine K. Hanley Family Shelter, the Courthouse expansion, the Public Safety and Transportation Operations Center, additional School-Age Childcare rooms, Clemyjontri Park and Turner Farm, as well as a number of public safety needs. Examples of the latter include 32 positions to provide a fourth person on each of the Fire and Rescue Department's rescue companies to enhance forcible entry, primary search and fire attack, as well as allow quicker extrication of trapped victims. Also recommended were 24 police officers to support the county's eight district police stations and five to provide guidance and direction to call-takers and dispatchers for police-related calls. Another six positions are proposed for the Criminal Investigations Bureau to address an increase in crime that parallels population growth. Specific benchmarking data, found in the Public Safety Program Area Summary in Volume 1 of the annual budget plan, illustrates the effectiveness of the public safety agencies compared to other large jurisdictions.

Other proposed public-safety related initiatives include three animal control officers, full implementation of the after-school program at county middle schools one year earlier than anticipated in order to provide programs for a population segment that is most at risk for gang involvement, and seven positions in the Health Department including two to coordinate the Medical Reserve Corps; two to provide support to the Communicable Disease Program; one to address critical strategic planning health priorities; and two to staff a chemical hazard response capability.

A large part of the General Fund increase is associated with salary adjustments and higher fringe benefit costs, including health insurance premiums. While no premium increase is anticipated for the county self-insurance plan, an average increase of 10 percent is projected for Health Maintenance Organizations (HMOs). The county's experience with HMOs mirrors the national cost increase of 8-10 percent per year, while the self-insured plan has seen medical cost growth below the

national average.

Public safety employees (not under pay for performance) will be eligible for regular step increases (depending on their current step) at a total cost of \$2 million and their pay will be adjusted 4.25 percent for the market rate adjustment in July 2006 at a total cost of \$15.6 million in FY 2007. Uniformed employees in the Fire and Rescue Department also will receive a 2 percent across-the-board increase at a cost of \$3.4 million based on comparisons with other neighboring jurisdictions.

Funding of \$10.8 million is recommended for the Pay for Performance (PFP) program which includes approximately 8,000 non-public safety employees. The pay scales for non-public safety employees also will be increased to reflect the 4.25 percent market rate adjustment that is designed to keep county pay scales from falling below the marketplace. Non-public safety employees do not receive this adjustment through a cost-of-living increase. Pay increases continue to be earned through performance. By adjusting the pay scales, however, employees' long-term earning potential remains competitive with the market.

Other budget adjustments include \$0.4 million to increase shift differential and revise the holiday pay structure for those who provide essential services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The shift differential rates are proposed to increase from \$0.85 to \$0.90 per hour for the evening shift, and from \$1.10 to \$1.30 per hour for the midnight shift in order to remain comparable with surrounding jurisdictions. Holiday pay policies will be adjusted to provide holiday compensation for those required to work on the actual holiday when that differs from the county-observed holiday (New Year's Day, July 4, Veterans Day, Christmas Eve or Christmas Day). Employees also will receive hour-for-hour compensation for call-back and mandated overtime hours

#### County Core Purpose and Vision Elements

To protect and enrich the quality of life for the people, neighborhoods and diverse communities of Fairfax County by:

- ♦ Maintaining Safe and Caring Communities
- ♦ Building Livable Spaces
- ♦ Practicing Environmental Stewardship
- ♦ Connecting People and Places
- ♦ Creating a Culture of Engagement
- ♦ Maintaining Healthy Economies
- ♦ Exercising Corporate Stewardship

**See the  
FY 2007 Budget  
online at  
[www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb](http://www.fairfaxcounty.gov/dmb).**

*See Budget, page 8*

## Focus on Benefits



# Virginia college savings plans

### Three savings options.

A college education can be the key that unlocks the door to opportunity. It can pave the way for a more secure future. Saving for college with the Virginia College Savings Plans makes good sense. It offers convenience, affordability and great tax advantages. You can use your savings at colleges throughout the country. The plan provides three Section 529 options:

- ♦ The Virginia Prepaid Education Program (VPEP) locks in future costs for today's students in the ninth grade or younger. VPEP covers in-state undergraduate tuition and mandatory fees for the normal full-time course load at Virginia public colleges. Your VPEP investment comes with a guaranteed rate of return for other types of colleges nationwide. Enrollment for VPEP ends on March 31, 2006.

- ♦ The Virginia Education Savings Trust (VEST) offers a selection of investment funds. Students of all ages can participate wherever they live. You can use VEST to pay for all major college expenses. These include tuition, fees, room and board, textbooks and required supplies and equipment. Enrollment for VEST

is open all year.

- ♦ The CollegeAmerica Plan offers 21 funds through American Funds, one of the oldest and largest mutual fund companies in the country. With CollegeAmerica, you can save for all major college expenses. This option is only available through financial advisers. The deferred compensation plan representatives will serve as financial advisers for employees. Employees who use the deferred compensation help desk representatives will qualify for lower fund fees due to the e-share option offered to participants in an employer sponsored program. Enrollment for CollegeAmerica is open all year.

**Informational meetings.** A Virginia College Savings Plan representative, **Nicole Douglas**, will present information on the VPEP and VEST options. A deferred compensation plan representative will present information on the CollegeAmerica option. Two informational meetings will be held at the Government Center on March 14 from 10:30 a.m. to noon and from 1:30 p.m. to 3 p.m. in Conference Room 4/5. To register for the program, call the Deferred Compensation Help Desk at 703-324-4995, TTY 711. ■

## Fairfax County Federal Credit Union to fill one board position

One position on the Fairfax County Federal Credit Union Board of Directors will be filled soon.

Serving as a director for Fairfax County Federal Credit Union offers a unique learning experience. Members of the board of directors volunteer their time and expertise on behalf of all credit union members. The board is responsible for developing policy and guiding the direction of the credit union. Directors meet monthly throughout the year and also participate on committees that meet at least quarterly.

Applicants must be at least 18 years of age and a FCFCU member in good standing. The results of the election will be announced at the annual meeting on Tuesday, May 16, at the Fairfax County Government Center.

If you wish to apply to be a member of the board of directors, you must submit an application to the nominating committee. Nominating committee members are **Martha Collier**, chair, **Patricia McClenic**, **Simuel Young** and **Jeff Wieczorek**. You may request a nomination package by sending an e-mail to [dmacdonnell@fairfaxcu.org](mailto:dmacdonnell@fairfaxcu.org). Applications must be received by close of business on March 17. Send applications to: Nominating Committee, Fairfax County Federal Credit Union, 4201 Members Way, Fairfax, VA 22030. Applications received after March 17 will not be considered. For further information, call **Danielle MacDonnell** at 703-218-9900, ext. 119, TTY 711. ■

## Briefs

## Briefs

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## March is Mediation Month

In recognition of March Mediation Month for the commonwealth of Virginia, the Alternative Dispute Resolution office will be holding information sessions for employees at 10 and 11 a.m. every Thursday in March in its office, located in the Government Center, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Room 162. Please call 703-324-3348, 703-324-3349, or 703-324-3361, TTY 711, for more information.

## Teen Driving Forum

A forum for teen drivers and the adults who care about them will be held tomorrow, Saturday, March 4, from 9 a.m. to 12:15 p.m. in the Board Auditorium of the Government Center. Registration opens at 8:15 a.m. For more information or

to register online, go to [www.fairfax-county.gov/teendriving](http://www.fairfax-county.gov/teendriving).

## Nominations for Human Rights Commission Awards

The Fairfax County Human Rights Commission is accepting nominations for its 28th annual Human Rights Awards. The awards recognize individuals, nonprofit organizations and businesses for outstanding accomplishments in the area of human rights in Fairfax County during 2005.

Nominations may represent a single significant activity, long-term commitment displayed through various activities, or corporate equality programs of an extensive and outstanding nature. Award recipients will be honored at a banquet on May 18.

The deadline for submitting 2005

nominations is March 17. For further information and nomination forms, write the Human Rights Commission, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 318, Fairfax, VA 22035-0093, call 703-324-2953, TTY 703-324-2900, or e-mail [michael.cash@fairfaxcounty.gov](mailto:michael.cash@fairfaxcounty.gov).

## Volunteers Needed

Fairfax Area Agency on Aging's Volunteer Home Services program needs volunteers in the Falls Church, Reston and Route 1 areas. Volunteers assist with a variety of services to help senior adults maintain their independence while living in their own homes. To learn more about how you can volunteer to help senior adults, please call the AAA Volunteer Intake Line at 703-324-5406, TTY 711. ■

# Reston apartment purchase moves county closer to affordable housing goal

A major milestone in the goal to preserve affordable housing in the county was announced Feb. 6. Board Chairman **Gerald E. Connolly**; Supervisor **Catherine Hudgins**, who represents the Hunter Mill District; **Paula Sampson**, director of Housing and Community Development; and **Randy Kell**, CEO of The Mark Winkler Company, announced the county's purchase of the Crescent Apartments adjacent to the Lake Anne area in Reston from the Winkler company. This will preserve the 180-unit apartment complex as part of the county's affordable housing initiative, bringing the total number of units pre-

served to date to 846.

The purchase was made from funds approved in this year's budget for affordable housing, equal to the value of one penny of the real estate tax rate. The Crescent Apartments will be owned by Fairfax County and managed by

the Quantum Real Estate Management Company.

The announcement was made in the newly remodeled press room located on the first floor of the Government Center. The press room will have facilities for media representatives who attend county press briefings and Board of Supervisors' meetings. The facility also will be an important resource for communicating with the media during emergency situations. ■



*Supervisor Hudgins and Chairman Connolly, at the podium, announce the county purchase of Crescent Apartments in Reston.*



Budget, from page 5

worked (not to exceed the employee's normal scheduled work hours) when the holiday (actual and observed) falls on a scheduled day off. The holiday policy will be revised to show hour-for-hour holiday compensation on holidays (actual and observed) that fall on their scheduled work day in situations where the employee does not work, consistent with their scheduled hours.

After funding these essential baseline needs, an amount of \$134.94 million was available beyond the Budget Guidelines, which the county executive placed in reserve for the board's consideration. However, he identified a number of pressing needs and investment opportunities including infrastructure improvements such as safety enhancements for bus stops and shelters, capital renewal, land acquisition, county entryway signage, construction inflation increases, courtroom renova-

tion and elevator replacement, as well as critical board projects such as streetlight, trail and sidewalk improvements. He also recommended that the board set aside \$10 million for an accounting requirement that states how local governments should account for and report future liability for post-employment benefits. Finally, an amount of almost \$57 million was set aside to consider

additional real estate tax relief and/or invest in other pressing needs.

The calendar below shows the timetable for presentation, review and discussion of the FY 2007 Advertised Budget Plan. Those employees who were not able to see the county executive's presentation on Monday, Feb. 27, can view the replay on Channel 16 (see dates below). ■

## Budget Calendar

**Feb. 27** - County Executive Tony Griffin presented the proposed FY 2007 budget to the Board of Supervisors.\*

**April 3, 4, 5** - Public hearings\*\* will be held in the board auditorium of the Government Center at 7 p.m. Those wishing to speak may contact the Office of the Clerk to the Board at 703-324-3151, TTY 711, to be put on the speakers list.

**April 24** - The Board of Supervisors marks up the budget, 10 a.m.

**May 1** - The board formally adopts the budget.

\* The presentation of the proposed budget will air on Channel 16 on March 3 and 6 at 9 p.m.

\*\* The public hearings will be televised live on Fairfax County Government Cable Channel 16. ■

# Courier Photo Contest

The 2006 *Courier* Photo Contest was announced in the Feb. 17 *Courier* along with the rules.

Here is the entry form that you should attach to the back of your photo(s). You'll also find the rules

and entry form on the Infoweb at <http://infoweb/courier>.

Send your entries by mail or interoffice distribution or bring them to Courier Photo Contest, Office of Public Affairs, 12000 Government Center Parkway, Suite 551, Fairfax, VA 22035-0065. But remember, the deadline is April 21. ■

**Courier Photo Contest Entry Form**

*Employees and retirees of the county and schools are welcome to enter the Photo Contest. There is a limit of five photos per entrant. Deadline for submissions: April 21. Good Luck!*

Please check one:  
☐ I will pick up my photo.  
☐ Mail my photo to me (Provide address of work site below).

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Work Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 Agency \_\_\_\_\_ Division (if any) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Please remember to mount your photo.

Check category: (only one)


1. <input type="checkbox"/> Animals	5. <input type="checkbox"/> Nature
2. <input type="checkbox"/> Snapshot	6. <input type="checkbox"/> Structure
3. <input type="checkbox"/> County-related	7. <input type="checkbox"/> Flora
4. <input type="checkbox"/> People	8. <input type="checkbox"/> Quirky

Photo title (to appear on entry during exhibit) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that the photo I am submitting is my original work and that I am the sole copyright owner. I understand that it may be published and displayed publicly.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_



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